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Le origini di "Salammbô" by LUIGI FOSCOLO BENEDETTO, studio del realismo storico di Gustave Flaubert. Pubblicazioni del R. Istituto di Studi Superiori Pratici e di Perfezionamento in Firenze. Sezione di Filologia e Filosofia. N. S. Vol. I., Firenze, Bemporad e Figlio, 1920. Pp. 333 + 14 (index).

This work is the first attempt at an *étude d'ensemble* of the sources of *Salammbô*. The author does not announce a study of all the sources of all the elements of the novel, but his reader wonders occasionally what unexpressed principle guided him, as when he leaves out of consideration the comparison of Flaubert's campaign with its sources.¹ This, to be sure, had been done by Fay,² as the sources of the religious element had been examined by Hamilton,³ but Mr. Benedetto is often none too content with the work of his predecessors.⁴

¹ Perhaps because he had done this in *Atene e Roma*, 1919, pp. 39-48: "L'interpretazione filologica di Polibio in *Salammbô*," where his findings are less favorable to Flaubert the historian than, on the whole, in the present volume.

² P. B. Fay and A. Coleman: "Sources and Structure of *Salammbô*," Elliott Monographs, no. 2, Baltimore, 1914.

³ Arthur Hamilton: "Sources of the Religious Element in *Salammbô*," Elliott Monographs, no. 4, Baltimore, 1917.

⁴ Of the studies of Abrami and Ferrère he says (p. 17, n.): "ma sono assolutamente insufficienti." In the same note he refers to the "critica spicciola" of Pézard and of Trévières. Of the latter he says (p. 109, n.): "gli appunti di Trévières . . . a questo riguardo sono privi di senso." One of his remarks on Hamilton's study is both querulous and misleading. To the discussion of the sources of *Salammbô*'s prayer (p. 120), he adds in a note: "A. Hamilton . . . è qui, come del resto in quasi tutti gli appunti ond'è costituito il suo volumetto, vittima di un errore fondamentale: non gli passa pel capo che il Flaubert abbia utilizzato direttamente le fonti classiche e crede indicarci la vera fonte col trascriverci qualche allusione moderna." He continues that in this case H. refers merely to a paraphrase of the prayer in the *Mém. de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 1786, adding: "è quella l'unica fonte di cui si contenta lo Hamilton." The fact is that in this case H. cites, in addition, Pliny, Plutarch, and Creuzer (pp. 5-8), and his bibliographical appendix (pp. 119-123) indicates how unfounded the general statement is. It would be more exact to say that H. seems to assume that Flaubert used translations instead of Greek or Latin originals, whereas Benedetto assumes the contrary. No one could pronounce a judgment on this very nice point without considerable study. A reader of the letters of Flaubert with their constant references to his browsings in the classical field will agree that

The volume before us is divided into two parts; each part into five chapters. Part I, entitled *L'herità romantica*, discusses the early enthusiasm of Flaubert for the Orient; the very definite traces in *Salammbô* of the effects of his journey in the East with Ducamp; the episodes and motifs found in the first *Saint Antoine* that reappear in *Salammbô*; the evidences in the novel of the influence of Michelet, of Chateaubriand, of Gautier (*le Roman de la momie*); and the survival of such romantic elements as a fondness for scenes of horror. Most of this ground has been examined in preceding studies. Mr. Benedetto, however, makes clearer the debt of *Salammbô* to the author's experiences and previous literary activity. He inclines to the well-known view that the first suggestion for the novel came from Michelet's *Histoire romaine* (p. 66). More interesting and more suggestive is his discussion of Chateaubriand as a source for certain elements of *Salammbô*. Like Sainte-Beuve, he thinks that *les Martyrs* was of more importance in the conception of the character of the heroine than the author was willing to admit (p. 69 sq.), though he makes one or two rather forced comparisons.⁵

Interesting, too, is the discussion in chapter five of Flaubert's insistence on the horrible. One must make allowance for the ironical exaggeration in certain well-known passages of his letters of the time (e. g., *Corr.* III, p. 301), but it is clear that contempt for the bourgeois—that is, for mankind—which, in most of the romantics was a pose, more or less founded on temperament, had become with Flaubert a fundamental pessimism, and that he was not sorry, in depicting life in Carthage, to draw up a black indictment against his kind. As Benedetto observes (p. 84), "Ogni

it is unwise to assume that he read Apuleius in translation. In fact the comparisons made by Benedetto (pp. 120-123) indicate that he had in mind the Latin text of the prayers of Lucius to Isis and of Psyche to Ceres.

Of interest in this connection are two quotations: "Si je savais le grec au moins, et j'y ai perdu tant de temps!" (*Corr.* II, p. 14, 1850); and "Depuis dix-huit jours . . . j'ai lu . . . la grande hymne à Cérès (dans les *Poésies homériques* en grec) . . ." (*Corr.* III, p. 190, 1858).

⁵ E. g. "Leggiamo nei *Martyrs*: 'les chars roulaient vers le stade'; in *Salammbô*: 'les grands chariots . . . faisaient tourner leurs roues sur les dalles des rues.' L'immagine flaubertiana, 'les citernes remplies avaient l'air de boucliers d'argent perdus dans les cours' è stata probabilmente ispirata dagli 'scudi persiani appesi al frontone del portico' che il Chateaubriand fa risplendenti ai 'fuochi del vespero'" (pp. 71-72).

lettore è sorpreso dal compiacimento con cui accoglio nel suo libro il documento eccentrico, la rarità, la stranezza impressionante, tanto che *Salammbô* ha qualche volta l'aria di un 'sottisier,' di una grande caricatura della vita antica."

Part II is entitled "Il lavoro di ricostruzione." In the five chapters Mr. Benedetto examines the sources of Flaubert's attempt to reconstruct the topography of the city, the Carthaginian religion, the government of the city-state, the organization of its armies, and the ethnical character of its people. The chapter on religion is much the longest, but in view of Hamilton's detailed study of the same subject, it contains less new material than the other chapters of this part.

Upon examination of Flaubert's conception of the geography and plan of the city, one finds that he utilized the best studies of his day on Carthaginian archæology, but Benedetto points out the curious fact that in the Carthage of *Salammbô* the points of the compass are somewhat shifted. Flaubert makes the isthmus stretch south-southwest toward the mainland instead of due west (p. 89), which allows his sun to set over the waves instead of behind a land horizon. Otherwise he relied chiefly on Dureau de la Malle and on Appian, filling in with details in order to give the picture more precision, but never succeeding in sketching a Carthage of which the reader gets an adequate visual image.

The fundamental sources for the religious element, according to Mr. Benedetto, are Apuleius, the Pseudo-Lucianic *De dea syria*, and Diodorus Siculus. He is inclined to deprecate the importance generally assigned to Creuzer—who, however, drew generously on these very sources—, of Falbe, of Dureau de la Malle, whose works were, in Hamilton's opinion (*op. cit.*, pp. 106-167), Flaubert's main reliance. The reviewer cannot pronounce a judgment. A detailed study of the question would be necessary.*

The passages in which Mr. Benedetto discusses Flaubert's basic conception of the Carthaginian religion (pp. 141 ff.) constitute his

* It would seem that Hamilton is correct in considering that Creuzer is one of the sources for *Salammbô's* prayer (Benedetto, pp. 120-123); that the Biblical source given in *Elliott Monographs*, number 2, p. 46, for Salammbô's abstention from wine and meat and the defilement of the house of death is more convincing than the comparison with Apuleius (B., p. 125); and that Aelian's "Natural History" is, as Hamilton asserts, the source for the details about the lions in the temple of Moloch.

most interesting contribution. Hamilton's monograph covered very thoroughly what we may call the physical sources, the texts that supplied the raw material of characteristic and picturesque details. Benedetto examines the leading ideas that dominate Flaubert's version of the theology of Carthage. His work, then, is interpretative and critical, in addition to being a study of origins. In fact, as regards sources, he adds but little to Hamilton's findings.⁷ His particular interest lies in interpreting Flaubert's view of the rôle of religion in Carthage.

He points out (pp. 141-149) that Flaubert correctly conceived of Carthaginian faith as founded on belief in a dual divine principle, Tanit-Baal, instead of in the triad, Tanit-Baal-Eschmoun, accepted by most of his modern sources, and that this view is sound both in fact and artistically. Only so could he clearly bring out the opposition between the two deities in the struggle symbolized by the fate of the leading characters. On the other hand he holds (pp. 152 ff.) that Flaubert committed an anachronism in identifying Juno Punica with Tanit, though his evidence does not show that the novelist failed in this respect to follow accepted authorities. The same comment is to be made on the critic's protest against Flaubert's identification of Kronos with Moloch instead of with Baal-Khamon (pp. 206-208). He shows (pp. 173 ff.) that Flaubert, in making the famous *peplos* the mantle of Tanit and the *palladium* of Carthage, acted on neither historical nor legendary evidence, despite the warmth of his reply to Sainte-Beuve.

In pursuance of the interesting view that the whole novel is dominated by the religious element, of greater importance are Benedetto's interpretation of the violation of the temple of Tanit as a sort of initiation ceremony (pp. 187 ff.), his conception of the incidents of the chapter *Sous la tente* as constituting a sacrifice to Tanit (p. 185), and of Salammbô and Mâtho—themselves repre-

⁷ Compare Flaubert's interest in the Diana of Ephesus seen by him at Naples as one source for one of the representations of Tanit (pp. 46, 168); the passage from Tertullian on human sacrifice in ancient Carthage (p. 201); Benedetto's belief that the Biblical episode of the destruction of the prophets of Baal (I Kings, xviii) had much to do with the genesis of the sacrifice to Moloch (pp. 198-199); his argument that the different stages of the progress of Spendius and Mâtho through the temple of Tanit reflect the initiation ceremonies described in Apuleius (pp. 187-192).

sentative of the opposing divine principles—as symbolic of the primitive and passionate nature of oriental love as imagined by Flaubert (pp. 245 ff.). To approach the novel from this point of view is to give it greater dignity. It becomes apparent that Flaubert's long and arduous labors, of which so much has been said, were not undertaken primarily to gather picturesque and extraordinary details. He studied Carthaginian history, beliefs, and institutions chiefly in order to arrive at an understanding of the people. He came to believe that the Oriental discloses himself most completely through his religion, and this belief determined very largely his conception of the book. Mr. Benedetto has thus done Flaubert a great service. Previous students have not taken seriously enough his oft-quoted cry: “Je me moque de l'archéologie! Si la couleur n'est pas une, si les détails détonnent, si les mœurs ne dérivent pas de la religion et les faits des passions, . . . s'il n'y a pas, en un mot, harmonie, je suis dans le faux” (*Corr.* III, p. 343).

Flaubert met greater difficulties in his attempt to reconstruct the Carthaginian state. The topic was less congenial and scanty information was available. Hence the political organization of Carthage is meagerly and not over-clearly indicated on the basis of Aristotle's *Politica* and of Livy. Only two concepts stand out clearly: the plutocratic character of the ruling oligarchy and their fierce opposition to domination by a single man.

The military organization of Carthage was depicted after Polybius and Herodotus. The most important characters in the struggle were largely the novelist's own creation: Mâtho, a sort of Bug-Jargal, and Spendius, his antithesis, an adaptation of Plutarch's Aratus. His endeavor was to depict the armies, not as an indiscriminate horde, but as a composite of different races, distinguished by their weapons, their religious practices, their differing temperaments. His subject, as Benedetto remarks, was not so much the war against the mercenaries as ancient warfare in general. He was thus free to scour antiquity for precise and vivid details.

In contrast with many critics (e. g., Sainte-Beuve, the Goncourts, Faguet), Benedetto holds that the characters of the novel are to a very considerable degree individually and racially distinct. The chief Punic traits that Flaubert found in his sources were superstition, greed, fondness for ceremony, cruelty, faithlessness.

Thus the people are typified in Hannon and Hamilcar, the latter, drawn largely from what is known about Hannibal and representing the noblest aspects of Carthaginian nature.

In his conclusion Mr. Benedetto recognizes the artist's failure to reproduce entirely his own vision, to keep out of the novel his own sense of weariness. The historical material was often an incumbrance. Yet it was a fundamental condition of the subject. The subject itself, then, is the real weakness. Flaubert recognized that he must exaggerate, must magnify his characters to the point of melodrama in order to give them the proper relief. And such crimson patches stand beside passages in which he reproduces from his sources tiny details of life and customs as though for a scholarly article. His fundamental romantic pessimism made him a satirist in *Salammbô*, despite the abundance of the exotic splendor in which he delighted; it made him a satirist of his kind in the *Education sentimentale*, where the drabness of modern life renders more hopeless a picture unrelieved by color, light, the movements of huge masses, eastern richness. These two volumes, apparently so different, express therefore the same principle, their author's most intimate judgment of life.

Source studies on Flaubert have usually lacked an organizing principle. They have been concerned with details, with the external world of *Salammbô*, rather than with its inner meaning. It is evident that the author of this new study, in addition to his special competence in classical and oriental archæology, is possessed of critical discernment and literary acumen. Therefore, his well-written and well-printed book, appearing on the eve of the celebration of the centennial of Flaubert's birth, has unusual importance. The author expresses the wish that it may serve as a sort of handbook to the novel. It can do so, of course, only to serious readers, and will not lead to the founding of many *Salammbô* clubs, but the serious reader may address himself to its perusal with the confident expectation that the novel will thereby gain in richness and significance.

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